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Follow-up to General Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system and to the decisions of the twenty-fifth meeting of chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies, pertaining to the harmonization of working methods

Constructive dialogue between treaty bodies and States parties

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The General Assembly, in its resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, encouraged the human rights treaty bodies to collaborate in the elaboration of an aligned methodology for their constructive dialogue with States parties, with the aim of making the dialogue more effective, maximizing the use of the time available and allowing for a more interactive and productive dialogue. The chairpersons, at their twenty-fifth meeting, also recommended discussing the alignment of the methodologies for the interactive dialogue with States parties at their twenty-sixth meeting (A/68/334, paragraph 45).

The present note by the secretariat contains an overview of previous discussions on the subject and of existing treaty body practices with respect to the constructive dialogue with States parties. In the note, elements for endorsement by the chairpersons are also suggested, based on good practices identified and the contents of resolution 68/268.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 68/268 of 9 April 2014 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, encouraged "the human rights treaty bodies, with a view to accelerating the harmonization of the treaty body system, to continue to enhance the role of their Chairs in relation to procedural matters, including with respect to formulating conclusions on issues related to working methods and procedural matters, promptly generalizing good practices and methodologies among all treaty bodies, ensuring coherence across the treaty bodies and standardizing working methods" (para. 38).

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly recognized "the important, valuable and unique role and contribution of each of the human rights treaty bodies in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including through their examination of the progress made by States parties to the respective human rights treaties in fulfilling their relevant obligations and their provision of recommendations to States parties on the implementation of such treaties". The General Assembly further recognized "the importance of continued efforts to improve the efficiency of the working methods of the human rights treaty body system". It also emphasized "that the strengthening and enhancing of the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system is a common goal shared by stakeholders who have different legal competencies in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international human rights instruments establishing treaty bodies", and recognized in this regard "the ongoing efforts of different treaty bodies towards strengthening and enhancing their effective functioning".

3. In the light of the above, in the same resolution the General Assembly encouraged "the treaty bodies to collaborate towards the elaboration of an aligned methodology for their constructive dialogue with the States parties, bearing in mind the views of States parties as well as the specificity of the respective committees and of their mandates, with the aim of making the dialogue more effective, maximizing the use of the time available and allowing for a more interactive and productive dialogue with States parties" (para. 5). It also encouraged the treaty bodies "to adopt short, focused and concrete concluding observations, including the recommendations therein, that reflect the dialogue with the relevant State party" (para. 6).

4. At the twenty-fifth meeting of the chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies, the chairpersons recommended that at their twenty-sixth meeting they discuss the possible alignment of methodologies for the constructive dialogue with States parties, including the content of written guidelines, the role and responsibilities of country task forces or rapporteurs, the clustering of questions by themes, the equitable allocation of time between treaty body members and the State party, the follow-up to previous concluding observations and significant developments (A/68/334, paragraph 45). The present note by the secretariat is submitted pursuant to that recommendation and General Assembly resolution 68/268.

5. The State party review by the treaty bodies consists of four components which build on one another: the submission by the State party of its initial or periodic report, the constructive dialogue between the State party and the committee, the concluding observations and the follow-up to those observations. The State party review forms a continuum and each cycle builds on the preceding one. Hence, the present note by the secretariat should be read in conjunction with the notes by the secretariat on a simplified reporting procedure (HRI/MC/2014/4) and on concluding observations (HRI/MC/2014/2).

6. In general, the face-to-face or constructive dialogue follows the same broad structure for all treaty bodies: (a) the State party is invited to send a delegation to attend the meetings at which the committee will consider the report of the State party; (b) the head of the delegation, usually a representative of the Government of the State in question, is invited to make a brief opening statement; (c) members of the committee, in some cases led by the country rapporteur(s) or country task force, pose questions on specific aspects of the report of particular interest or concern; and (d) the State party delegation responds to those questions. In principle, an initial review requires a comprehensive assessment by the committee of the enjoyment by all of the rights in the treaty concerned and the related compliance by the State party concerned. A periodic report is by its nature more focused on the previous recommendations made by the committee. In practice, however, and with some degree of variation between the different treaty bodies, the difference between the dialogue concerning an initial report and the dialogue on a periodic report is minimal.

7. There are significant variations with regard to the methodology applied by the respective treaty bodies in the conduct of the constructive dialogue with States parties. This has led States and stakeholders to call for improving the efficiency and structure of dialogues with a view to enhancing accessibility, effectiveness and impact. The present note provides an overview of previous discussions and recommendations on the constructive dialogue. It also describes the working methods of individual treaty bodies with respect to the constructive dialogue, as they stood at the time of drafting of the note, covering the practices of all treaty bodies that are mandated to receive and consider reports submitted by States parties. In the last part of the note, elements for aligning the methodologies for the constructive dialogue are suggested for endorsement by the chairpersons, based on good practices identified and on resolution 68/268.

II. Background

8. A number of meetings and United Nations documents have examined the alignment of the methodologies of the treaty bodies for the constructive dialogue with States parties.

9. The chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies, in their statement adopted at the informal consultation in Washington, D.C., on 1 February 2014 in the context of the treaty body strengthening process, reaffirmed their commitment to the harmonization and improvement of working methods by treaty bodies, both individually and collectively. In that context, the chairpersons noted that the treaty bodies remained committed to formulating their concluding observations on the basis of the dialogue with States and other stakeholders.

10. At their twenty-third annual meeting in 2011, the chairpersons adopted the following points of agreement regarding the constructive dialogue with States parties (A/66/175, para. 4):

(a) **Written guidelines for States parties.** Each committee should prepare written guidelines for its dialogue with States parties in the context of the reporting process, keeping in mind the practice of the Human Rights Committee. The guidelines should be translated into the working languages of the respective committees and be transmitted to the State party in question in advance of the consideration of its report. The fact that the secretariat systematically provided technical briefings for the permanent missions of the States parties scheduled for review was welcomed;

(b) **Length of the dialogue.** The dialogue with a State party should, as a general rule, be limited to two meetings (six hours in total), except in the case of initial reports. The suggestion, made by some participants in the informal technical consultations for States parties held at Sion, Switzerland, in May 2011, to allocate only one meeting (three hours in

total) for the dialogue with a State party was not supported, as that would leave insufficient time for a meaningful dialogue on, and an in-depth analysis of, the implementation of the relevant treaty by the State party;

(c) **Opening statements.** Each treaty body should allocate no more than 30 minutes for the opening statements of States parties, in order to maximize the use of the time available and allow for a more interactive dialogue with the State party. However, it was noted that flexibility could be applied in extraordinary circumstances;

(d) **Time management.** The chairpersons of the treaty bodies should exercise their power to lead the dialogue effectively, so as to ensure a balanced exchange between treaty body members and the State party delegation. In that respect, the various treaty bodies were encouraged to introduce a time limit, based on the model applied by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, for interventions by their members and for States parties to reply to questions;

(e) **Country task forces.** The recommendation that each treaty body should give due consideration to the idea of establishing country task forces and a country rapporteur for the consideration of State party reports was reiterated;

(f) **Role of the country rapporteurs.** Based on the experience of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the country rapporteurs and/or country task forces, as relevant, should increasingly contribute to the preparation of the dialogue with a State party. That could be done, for example, through the circulation of a note by the rapporteur prior to the session and through prior consultation and coordination among members on issues they wish to raise.

11. In resolution 68/268, the General Assembly encouraged treaty bodies "to collaborate towards the elaboration of an aligned methodology for their constructive dialogue with the States parties, bearing in mind the views of States parties as well as the specificity of the respective committees and their mandates, with the aim of making the dialogue more effective, maximizing the use of the time available and allowing for a more interactive and productive dialogue with States parties" (para. 5).

12. In the Dublin II outcome document[1] recommendations were made for aligning the methodologies for the constructive dialogue with States parties, which formed the basis of the report of the High Commissioner on strengthening the human rights treaty body system (A/66/860). The High Commissioner recommended that the treaty bodies adopt written guidelines containing the following elements:

(a) A maximum of two meetings (six hours) should be allocated for the interactive dialogue with a State party. The two meetings should be held on two consecutive days (an afternoon meeting followed by a morning meeting);

(b) Country task forces, taking into account gender and geographical balance, should be established for the examination of State party reports, consisting of between two and five treaty body members, which would prepare the dialogue with a State party, including through prior consultation and coordination and a clear distribution of questions for the constructive dialogue to avoid repetition and overlap. Those coordination tasks could be led by the country rapporteur(s). All country task force members would pose the initial questions and subsequently the

[1] Available online at http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/HRTD/docs/DublinII_Outcome_Document.pdf.

majority of the questions put to the State party, while follow-up questions could be posed by other members of the treaty body not serving on the task force;

(c) The dialogue for periodic reports should focus only on the most significant human rights issues and the follow-up given by States parties to the previous concluding observations and questions should be clustered by themes;

(d) The chairpersons should continue to exercise their power to lead the dialogue effectively, so as to ensure a balanced exchange between treaty body members and the State party delegation and the interactive nature of the dialogue, including through the use of a speech timer;

(e) A maximum of 15 minutes should be allocated for the opening statements of States parties.

III. Existing treaty body practices as regards the constructive dialogue with States parties

13. In this section, the practices of the treaty bodies are analysed in the context of the recommendations endorsed by the chairpersons of the treaty bodies at their twenty-third meeting.

A. Written guidelines for States parties

14. At their twenty-third meeting, the chairpersons of the treaty bodies endorsed the recommendation that each committee elaborate written guidelines for its dialogue with States parties in the context of the reporting process, based on the practice of the Human Rights Committee. They also supported the recommendation that those guidelines be translated into the working languages of the respective committees and that they be transmitted to States parties in advance of the consideration of their reports (A/66/175, annex II, para. 19).

15. Since then, most treaty bodies have outlined their methodology for the constructive dialogue with States parties in their document on working methods. However, there is no set of written guidelines on the constructive dialogue, which is common to all treaty bodies.

B. Length of the constructive dialogue with States parties

16. At their twenty-third meeting, the chairpersons of the treaty bodies endorsed the recommendation that a dialogue with a State party should, as a general rule, be limited to a maximum of two meetings (six hours) (ibid., para.20).

17. All treaty bodies that conduct a constructive dialogue with States parties currently limit the duration of such dialogue to a maximum of two three-hour meetings for periodic reports. The Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights have maintained three meetings for initial reports. The Human Rights Committee, the Committee against Torture, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances systematically hold all their meetings relating to the dialogue with a State party over two consecutive days.

C. Time limits on opening statements by States parties

18. At their twenty-third meeting, the chairpersons of the treaty bodies endorsed the recommendation that each treaty body allocate a maximum of 30 minutes for the opening statements of States parties, in order to maximize the use of the time available and allow for a more interactive dialogue with the State party (ibid., para. 21).

19. Seven out of the nine treaty bodies which conduct a constructive dialogue with States parties (the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee against Torture, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances) have stipulated time limits for the opening statements of States parties. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stipulate time limits of between 20 and 30 minutes. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee against Torture, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances stipulate a time limit of up to 15 minutes. The Human Rights Committee does not formally stipulate time limits for the opening statements of States parties.

D. Time management of the constructive dialogue with States parties

20. At their twenty-third meeting, the chairpersons of the treaty bodies endorsed the recommendation that they should exercise their power to lead the dialogue effectively so as to ensure a balanced exchange between treaty body members and the State party delegation. The introduction of a time limit for interventions by treaty body members and the responses of States parties was also recommended (ibid., para. 22). The use of a speech timer was further recommended.

21. No treaty body has established detailed and formal parameters for the exercise by the chairperson of her or his authority to lead the dialogue with the objective of ensuring that the dialogue with States parties is balanced and interactive. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women is the only treaty body with formally fixed time limits and the use of a timer on interventions by treaty body members and States parties, although the Committee on the Rights of the Child has also practised this for a few sessions. The Committee on Enforced Disappearances formally sets time limits in the form of blocks of 30 to 45 minutes for States parties to respond to questions from the treaty body members, which are raised in two sets of thematic clusters. In other treaty bodies, the chairpersons exercise their discretion in facilitating interventions to ensure they are of a reasonable duration. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has requested the use of a timer for its sessions. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has issued time cards and the secretariat assists in keeping time, so that States parties adhere to the time limits for opening statements (20 minutes) and subsequent time limits for responses to questions.

E. Country task forces, country rapporteurs and speakers' lists

22. At their twenty-third meeting, the chairpersons of the treaty bodies endorsed the recommendation that each treaty body give due consideration to the possibility of establishing country task forces with country rapporteur(s) for the consideration of State party reports. Furthermore, it was recommended that the country rapporteur(s) and/or country tasks forces, as relevant, contribute to the preparation of the constructive dialogue

with States parties, based on the experiences of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (ibid., paras. 23 and 24).

23. Building on the Dublin II outcome document, in her report the High Commissioner recommended that geographical and gender balance be taken into account in the membership of such task forces which could consist of two to five treaty body members. The High Commissioner also recommended that the task forces prepare the dialogues with States parties, including through prior consultation and coordination of issues and a clear distribution of questions for the interactive dialogue to avoid repetition and overlap. She further recommended that this coordination task be led by the country rapporteur(s). Additionally, while task force members could pose the initial questions and the majority of the subsequent questions, follow-up questions could be posed by other members not serving on the task force (A/66/860, section 4.2.4).

24. All treaty bodies designate country rapporteurs, who play a leading role in the constructive dialogue with States parties. Three out of nine treaty bodies (the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child) establish country task forces for reviewing State party reports, with due regard to geographic and gender balance. However, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women does not use the task force system for the consideration of initial reports. At the time of drafting of this report, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was planning to pilot test the use of task forces at its next session.

25. The extent to which country rapporteurs and/or country task forces undertake consultations within the committees and coordinate the dialogue with the relevant States parties varies and no formal guidelines exist on the matter. Of the three treaty bodies that use task forces, two of them (the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child) limit participation in the constructive dialogue to task force members only. In this regard, the Committee on the Rights of the Child encourages members who are not part of the country task force to provide questions to the members of the task force. Members of the Committee who are not members of the country task force may, however, ask follow-up questions for clarification purposes during the time when the State party delegations are responding to the questions of the Committee. In the case of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the country rapporteur sends a short list of main themes to the State party concerned, with a view to guiding and focusing the constructive dialogue between the State party and the Committee.

F. Focused dialogues with States parties based on priorities and the follow-up to previous concluding observations

26. In resolution 68/268, the General Assembly called on treaty bodies to adopt short, focused and concrete concluding observations reflecting the dialogue with the relevant State party (para. 6). This provision requires treaty bodies to sharpen the constructive dialogue through prioritization and questions which assess the degree of implementation of previous concluding observations.

27. Five out of the nine treaty bodies which conduct a constructive dialogue with States parties (the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee against Torture, the Committee on Migrant Workers and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances) attempt to focus on priority issues in their constructive dialogue with States parties. The other four treaty bodies (the Committee on

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) have, to varying degrees, adopted an approach which tends to cover comprehensively all substantive provisions of their conventions. All nine treaty bodies take into account the follow-up undertaken by States parties on previous concluding observations during the constructive dialogue with States parties.

G. Thematic clustering of questions in the constructive dialogue with States parties

28. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities formally cluster their questions for the constructive dialogue. The Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee against Torture, the Committee on Migrant Workers and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances use thematic clustering to varying degrees and in an ad hoc manner.

IV. Suggested elements for aligning the methodologies for the constructive dialogue with States parties

29. A significant amount of discussion on aligning the methodologies for the constructive dialogue with States parties has already taken place. This has yielded some degree of alignment, although divergent practices continue to exist in similar processes. Undertaking further alignment along the lines of the existing good practices of treaty bodies would facilitate the engagement of States parties and stakeholders by stipulating common procedures for, and approaches to, the constructive dialogue across treaty bodies.

30. Improved structure, focus, balance and productivity during the dialogue with States parties would allow for a better understanding of the human rights situation in the State party concerned. As a result, treaty bodies would be able to identify more relevant, focused and implementable concerns and recommendations. The engagement of States parties would further improve, as they would have to familiarize themselves with only one methodology for the constructive dialogue. Overall, such an alignment would enhance opportunities for States parties to receive expert advice on how to improve the implementation of recommendations at the national level and hence strengthen compliance with international human rights standards.

31. **Based on existing good practices, the chairpersons could consider endorsing the following elements for the alignment of the constructive dialogue with States parties and recommend them for implementation by their respective treaty bodies:**

(a) Set a limit for the duration of the constructive dialogue with States parties on periodic reports of a maximum of two three-hour meetings and, in principle, conduct those meetings on two consecutive days, commencing in the afternoon of the first day and continuing in the morning of the subsequent day;

(b) Formally stipulate and enforce a time limit of 15 minutes for opening statements by States parties;

(c) The chairpersons should exercise their responsibility to play a greater role in leading the dialogue with States parties, with a view to ensuring a balanced and interactive dialogue;

(d) Use speech timers systematically;

(e) Allocate a time limit of up to six minutes for interventions by treaty body members, except for the introduction by the country rapporteurs;

(f) Establish country task forces, coordinated by the country rapporteurs, consisting of two to five treaty body members, in accordance with the size of the treaty body and with due regard to geographic and gender balance;

(g) Formally empower the country rapporteurs to undertake consultations and allocate questions amongst treaty body members prior to the dialogue with States parties;

(h) Allow all members of treaty bodies, with the exception of nationals of the State party under review, to ask questions in the follow-up to the interventions by the country rapporteurs and members of the country task forces;

(i) Focus the constructive dialogue with States parties on priority issues and the follow-up undertaken by States parties to the previous recommendations and views of the treaty body concerned;

(j) Cluster and sequence the content of the constructive dialogue according to themes, while specifying the corresponding articles in the treaty concerned.

32. **In accordance with the double parameters of the Poznan formula, reflected in paragraph 38 of resolution 68/268, the chairpersons could also endorse the draft guidelines on the constructive dialogue, contained in the annex to the present note by the secretariat, and recommend them for implementation by all treaty bodies.**

Annex

Draft guidelines for States parties on the constructive dialogue*

Human rights treaty bodies consider a State party report through a constructive dialogue with representatives of the State party concerned. That dialogue helps treaty bodies gain a full understanding of the human rights situation in the State party as it pertains to the treaty concerned. It also serves as the principal basis for the concluding observations of the treaty bodies. The constructive dialogue is an opportunity for States parties to receive expert advice on measures to strengthen compliance with international human rights law through the improved implementation of a treaty at the national level.

Composition of State party delegations for the face-to-face constructive dialogue with treaty bodies

The treaty bodies recommend that the State party delegation for the constructive dialogue is led by a senior official with State authority for the implementation of the respective treaty. It is also recommended that officials with concrete responsibility for, or involvement in, strategic and policy decisions related to the implementation of the respective treaty be included in the State party delegation. The State party should, as far as possible, include representatives from all key government ministries in charge of implementing and monitoring the treaty concerned. Gender balance should be taken into account. The State party may also wish to consider including in its delegation representatives from the parliament and the judiciary.

The reports of States parties are usually considered by treaty bodies in accordance with their dates of submission. Once a date for the consideration of a State party report is set and an invitation has been sent to the authorities concerned, at least six months in advance of the proposed meeting, the meeting cannot be postponed, except for reasons of force majeure, such as a natural catastrophe.

Country rapporteurs and country task forces of treaty bodies

Treaty bodies appoint up to two treaty body members to serve as country rapporteurs. The country rapporteur is the focal point for coordinating the constructive dialogue with the State party delegation. Treaty bodies may also decide to establish a country task force, consisting of two to five treaty body members, for the examination of State party reports. Geographic and gender balance is taken into account in the composition of country task forces.

The country rapporteurs carry the primary responsibility for the preparation of the constructive dialogue with a State party. This includes prior consultation, coordinating the coverage by the treaty body of the issues to be considered and distributing questions for the dialogue amongst the members of the country task force to avoid repetition and overlap. Follow-up questions may be asked by treaty body members who do not serve on the country task force.

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* Once adopted by a treaty body, the present guidelines on the constructive dialogue with States parties will supersede the provisions related to the constructive dialogue contained in pre-existing documents of the respective treaty body.

According to the established practice of all treaty bodies, members who are nationals of a State party being reviewed do not participate in any aspect of the review, including the constructive dialogue. In this regard, see also the Addis Ababa guidelines on the independence and impartiality of members of the human rights treaty bodies (A/67/222 and corr.1, annex I).

Role of the chairpersons of treaty bodies during the constructive dialogue

The chairpersons of the treaty bodies provide overall leadership of the constructive dialogue to ensure the effective development of the dialogue and a balanced and interactive exchange between treaty body members and the State party delegation.

Format of the constructive dialogue

Treaty bodies allocate two open and public meetings of a maximum of three hours each to the constructive dialogue with the State party delegation on periodic reports. The review of an initial report may take up to a maximum of three meetings of three hours each. To the extent possible, the two meetings allocated to the constructive dialogue on a periodic report are held over two consecutive working days, starting in the afternoon of the first day (3–6 p.m.) and continuing in the morning of the second day (10 a.m.–1 p.m.).

Focus of the dialogue

During the constructive dialogue on an initial report, the treaty bodies cover most or all of the treaty provisions, in order to allow for the fullest understanding of the situation in the country concerned. The constructive dialogue on periodic reports, on the other hand, prioritizes the implementation by the State party of the previous recommendations and new issues in the State party under review which the treaty body deems most important and urgent.

Thematic clustering of the dialogue

Questions put by treaty body members are thematically clustered, in accordance with the substantive provisions of the respective treaty. After treaty body members pose questions under a given thematic cluster, the State party is given an opportunity to respond; the next round of questions and answers follows and so on, until all the clusters have been covered. Treaty body members may pose follow-up questions during the response of the State party.

Time allocations

The chairperson of a treaty body manages the time, with a view to ensuring the balanced and interactive nature of the dialogue, including respect for time limits by both State party delegations and treaty body members.

The time allocated to the State party includes the opening statement, replies to questions from treaty body members and the closing statement. The opening statement made by the head of the State party delegation is limited to 15 minutes and the closing statement should not exceed 5 minutes. Responses by States parties should be focused and concise.

Languages used during the constructive dialogue

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, the treaty bodies will use three official working languages, with a fourth official language provided on an exceptional basis to facilitate communication among treaty body members, as determined by the committee concerned and without prejudice to the right of each State party to interact, both orally and in writing, with the treaty bodies in any of the six official United Nations

languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish). Should a State party delegation wish to bring its own interpreters to interpret into a language other than one of the official languages, this should be brought to the attention of the secretariat at least four weeks prior to the constructive dialogue.

Public nature of meetings

State party reviews by treaty bodies are undertaken in public meetings. For these types of meetings, the United Nations provides meeting summaries, prepared by the Department of Public Information, and summary records in one of the working languages of the treaty body. At the request of a State party, a summary record can be translated into another official United Nations language used by the State party.

Observers, such as representatives of the United Nations and of civil society, academics and others, may attend public meetings, as long as participants have received an accreditation in advance. It is not necessary for observers to be accredited with the Economic and Social Council in order to attend the public meetings of treaty bodies. Webcasting, audio taping and filming are allowed for public meetings, as long as they do not interfere with the dialogue.

Background documentation

All background documentation pertaining to State party reviews by treaty bodies are accessible on the website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (www.ohchr.org). No copies are distributed in the meeting room. Wireless Internet access is provided in the meeting rooms where treaty body sessions are conducted.

Accreditation

States parties are requested to submit a list of members of their delegation by note verbale to the respective treaty body secretariat no later than two weeks prior to the start of the session, so that arrangements can be made for the issuance of ground passes to enter United Nations premises. Members of delegations with disabilities can identify her or his accommodation needs, as explained in the guidance note (http://goo.gl/g6f6Gh). Subject to confirmation by the respective secretariats, the ground passes may generally be collected on the Friday prior to the commencement of the respective treaty body session at the security desks at Palais Wilson or the Pregny Gate at the Palais des Nations.

Technical briefings by the secretariats of the treaty bodies

The secretariats of the treaty bodies conduct technical briefings for States parties prior to each treaty body session to provide any further information that may be required by States parties prior to the constructive dialogue.